

## THE PRESS

## MAGAZINES

*Tristesse at Paris-Match*

Ordinarily, the *Paris-Match* building crackles with Gallic electricity as Europe's best-paid, most buoyant journalists exclaim over their latest exploits, argue about politics and shout out the window to pretty girls who preen in a café across the street in the hope that they may get their pictures in the magazine. But last week a heavy silence settled on *Paris-Match*. Staffers moved listlessly, speaking in low, conspiratorial whispers. An idle copy boy watched over the managing editor's office while its usual occupant, André Lacaze, appeared at the entrance to the building, waving an envelope. "There it is, pals, the final paycheck," he told his colleagues. "I'm all through after 20 years." Then he walked away.

The *tristesse* at *Paris-Match* stems from the strikes that swept France last month. Caught up in the heady drive to democratize all institutions, the prestigious *Paris-Match* staff announced its intention of forming an association to participate in the running of the magazine. The journalists were concerned that *Paris-Match* might slacken its hard-driving, even daredevil news coverage. But their ambition collided head-on with the more traditional views of Publisher Jean Prouvost, who has very firm ideas about who ought to be running a publication. At 83, Prouvost pleaded with his staff not to form the union, but they voted overwhelmingly to go ahead. The publisher retaliated by dismissing Executive Editor Roger Théron and Managing Editor Lacaze. Again the staff rebelled and voted to reinstate the editors. Prouvost backed down—for the moment.

Abject Failure. But he soon proceeded to outflank his staff. Without ostensibly firing the reinstated editors, he installed a new triumvirate over them:

René Cartier, business manager; Raymond Cartier (no kin), a star reporter; and Arnold de Contades, 35, a Prouvost grandson-in-law who has had no previous experience in journalism. Then he drew up a list of several staffers to be dismissed. This action, he maintained, was dictated by economic necessity. And, indeed, profits had slipped somewhat before the strike. By failing to publish four issues during the strikes, *Paris-Match* had lost at least \$1,000,000. Moreover, advertising orders had dropped, and the magazine was hard put to maintain its prestrike 1,280,000 circulation. By trimming the staff, Prouvost estimated that he could save \$400,000 a year. "For 20 years the staff grew," said Raymond Cartier. "But no one was fired. Our intention is to get rid of a few who don't work."

The *Paris-Match* employees, of course, were not buying that line. They promised to economize and voted to strike in October, the first month of heavy fall advertising, if the dismissals were carried out. They fear that the famed *Paris-Match* spirit has been fatally damaged, that the flamboyant weekly will never be quite the same again. "We are a team, with our 1,000th issue just published," said a veteran staffer. "It was going to be a big fete with a photo exposition at the Louvre with 1,000 pictures. Now, instead, the mood is one of mourning."



PROUVOST